BALLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) It is Government's Policy to expand trade relations with all countries, including neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh.

2. Under the aegis of SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), the Inter Governmental Group on Trade Liberalisation held talks to conclude the Second Round of Trade Negotiations, in which India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other member countries of SAARC participated. Following the negotiations, tariff concessions were exchanged on the basis of request lists of products identified for such concessions, and submitted by individual countries.

3. India granted tariff concessions on 513 tariff lines at 6 big level to Bangladesh, which include inorganic/ organic chemicals, articles of leather, wood, paper/paper board, textiles, footwear etc. at 50% of the applicable customs duty for consumer goods and 25% concession for the rest of the items. India received concessions of 10% of applied tariff on 204 tariff lines at 6 digit level from Bangladesh, which include agricultural products, organic and inorganic chemicals, leather, wood and wood products, paper, metal etc.

4. To Pakistan, India granted tariff concessions in respect of 375 tariff lines at 6 digit level, which include agricultural products, inorganic/organic chemicals, articles of wood, stone, automobile products etc. at a concession of 10% of applied tariff for a majority of items, and 15% for a few tariff lines. India received tariff concession of 10% of the applied tariff in respect of 230 tariff lines at 6 digit level from Pakistan which include vegetable products, inorganic/organic chemicals, plastic & rubber articles, articles of wood, paper base metal, industrial machinery etc.

5. During the 5th meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission held in New Delhi on 10-12 March 1997, agreements were reached on the use of additional routes for both exports and imports viz.

A. Haldibari-Chhilahati,
B. Gojadanga-Burimari,
C. Barsora-Cherragaon,
D. New Jalpaiguri-Tentulia,
E. Jalabazar-Betuli-Fultala.

and examination by a Group of Experts on issues such as points of entry, list of tradeable produce, terms of payments, quantitative limits and customs and immigration modalities.

India Isolated at WTO meet on the issue of Equal Treatment to Multinationals

4005. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India was isolated at the World Trade Organisation Ministerial Meeting in Singapore on the issue of giving equal treatment to multinational companies;

(b) if so, the stand taken by India at the meeting; and

(c) the consensus that emerged from the deliberations of the WTO meet?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) At the Singapore Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization, all the developed countries as well as a number of developing countries, actively pursued their proposal of starting an educative process to look at all issues connected with Investment, considering the trade and investment linkage. India took the stand that the WTO need not undertake negotiations to conclude a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) as Article 9 of the Agreement on Trade Related Investment Measure of the WTO provides for a review for implementation of the Agreement as well as consideration, *Inter-alia*, of investment policy issues by the year 1999. India's concern was fully taken on board and it was decided that a Working Group will be constituted to examine the relationship

between trade and investment for at last two years and that negotiations, if any, regarding multilateral disciplines in this area will take place only after an explicit consensus decision is taken among WTO members regarding such negotiations.

Measures for Boosting Indo-Russian Trade

4006. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a series of fresh policy/administrative measures for strengthening Indo-Russian trade and economic cooperation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the working group set up has identified/finalised/discussed the major problems in this regard, details thereof; and

(d) the details of strategies finalised and major projects identified/finalised for launching to expedite and accelerate the process of cooperation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Government have taken important policy measures in the recent months for strengthening of Indo-Russian trade and economic cooperation. These include, inter alia signing of Bilateral Customs Cooperation Agreement with the Government of Russian Federation in March, 1977, working out a mechanism for consignment sales under the debt repayment route, initiation of measures for opening of Indian banks in Russia, acceleration of export of drugs and pharmaceuticals under the aegis of Working group on Pharmaceuticals, efforts towards broad basing our trade basket with Russia with the active involvement of public sector trading organisations such as STC, MMTC and PEC and insistence on the Russian side to make the rupee allocations in a timely and adequate manner to experienced Russian entities.

An Indian delegation led by Commerce Secretary had visited Russia from January 23—27, 1997 in connection with the third meeting of the Indo-Russian Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation under the aegis of the Indo-Russian Inter Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation.

During the meeting, a wide range of issues of mutual interest for promotion and enhencing trade and economic cooperation with Russia were deliberated which inter alia include the following important issues:—

—allocation of rupee funds to the experienced Russian organisations in a timely and transparent manner;

—Steps to be taken to arrest the decline in the level of bilateral trade;

—to broad base the basket of goods traded between the two countries;

—to prepare a scheme for consigment exports and to work out suitable modalities in this regard;

—cooperation between the insurance agencies of the two countries;

—to cooperate in facilitating the establishment of joint ventures in both the countries;

—to recommend establishment of a sub-group on Financial and Banking Matters under the aegis of Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Promotion of Import Substitution

4007. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the concrete programme/policy Government propose with regard to promotion of import substitution and self-reliance for foreign trade; and

(b) the effective measures being taken by Government to improve the balance of payment of the country?